


2021.8.15



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Read Luke 10:25-29. This lawyer wished to "*put Jesus to the test*" and to "*justify himself*"—but Jesus turned the tables on him, testing and revealing the condition of **his** heart. Now read v. 36-37. We don't **know** how this lawyer responded to Jesus' challenge. How do **you** imagine it unfolded?
- 2 Tell about a time when you feigned more spiritual interest than you actually had. What did you hope to gain? How did it work out? Do you wish for a "do over"? Why or why not?
- 3 The human heart **longs** to contribute something to our salvation; nobody wants to be a "charity case". **Why** do you think that is? Is that motive commendable, or not? What does it say about us?
- 4 Why **must** salvation be absolutely—100%— a free gift? (**Not** just "why **is** it", but "why **must** it be so"?)
- 5 First John 3:10 states a basic principle that later is unpacked in greater detail. What is that principle?

- 6 In Jesus' parable, the priest and Levite merely **failed to give aid** (Luke 10:31-32), but Jesus called that "**not loving** one's neighbor as oneself". Now read 1 John 3:14-18.
In each of the following verses, how is a failure to love described, or how is the act of loving described?
"He who does not love abides in _____." (v. 14)
"Everyone who _____ his brother is a _____." (v. 15)
"We know love by this: that Jesus _____ for us." (v. 16a)
"We ought to _____ for the brethren." (v. 16b)
Not sharing material possession with those in need is called "_____ one's heart against him". (v. 17)
Verse 18 talks about **two ways** to "love"—one that we must **not** do, and one that we **must** do.

What are they? How are you doing on both of those?

Application-Challenge

- Is there someone in your life toward whom you know you should show more compassion? Simply confess your lack of compassion and ask for God's forgiveness and help to change.
- Complete this week's "**Digging Deeper**" section of *Talking Points, Walking Points*. It focuses on the compassion of God, and how we can become more like him.
- Begin praying for God to soften your heart and and to open your eyes to his opportunities to show compassion toward a neighbor.
- Make sure you're not trusting in your own goodness or obedience to God's law in order to gain his acceptance. If you've not yet done so, trust Christ alone as your sin-bearer.



- 1 This is a purely hypothetical question—how do **you** think the story ended (kind of like one of those “Choose Your Own Adventure” novels where you’re able to make choices which lead to different endings). Allow group members to follow their “what ifs” or their “I like to think that he...” endings. But take note: **how** folks finish the story will give you insights into how they conceive of man, of God, and of what’s “right”. For example, does it all have a happy ending? Does Jesus chase the guy down, unwilling for him to miss out on God’s salvation? We just don’t know how it ends (much like the Rich Young Ruler; Mark 10:17–23).
- 2 This question will require a brave soul to answer! So—be prepared with your own story. If you must “prime the pump”, try just giving the contours of the incident (not answering all the follow-up questions), and see if that’ll get someone else to volunteer. But, in the final analysis, be ready to lead them in a “post mortem” on your own experience. The goal is for group members to gain insight into the trickiness of our hearts as we approach these vulnerable issues of our own sinfulness and need for forgiveness.
- 3 This question is straight-forward. But keep your antennae up for the possibility of false piety in answers. For example, many people will be glad when they’re able to assist someone in need, but we hate being on the receiving end of charity. Yet if someone in genuine need of charity refused to accept it, we’d be inclined to criticize them as too proud. Try to help your group be brutally honest in examining the heart issues behind not wanting to be on the receiving end of charity (beside the obvious answer that needing charity indicates privations in your life, and nobody prefers to be destitute. But the issue is: if a person **genuinely needs** charity, what motives might influence them to decline it—and are those motives good.) The issue behind this question is this: all humans **are** spiritually bankrupt and need “charity” (ie grace).
- 4 The answer to this question is this: all humans **are** spiritually bankrupt and need forgiveness to be given to us. We have no spiritual resources. If God contributed 99% of our salvation, and 1% was up to us, we’d all go to hell. (God’s standard is infinite righteousness, and 1% of infinity is...infinity!). We are absolute charity cases when it comes to being fit to be in God’s presence. “Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone” isn’t just how Christianity is (as if other systems could serve equally well to get us to heaven)—Christianity is this way because nothing could satisfy God’s righteous demands.
- 5 **“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone** who does not practice righteousness **is not of God** (ie.: is not saved), nor the one **who does not love his brother.**”

Your objective in this question is simply for folks to see the plain meaning of this passage: a refusal to love one’s brother indicates that you are not saved. (Yes, sometimes there is great struggle involved in loving another person. Yes, we never love perfectly. But an unwillingness to love means that we’re still a child of the devil. The stronger one’s resistance to loving others, the greater should be his doubt that he truly is saved. That’s John’s point...and it’s the basis for the following question.

- 6 Jesus said that the priest’s and Levite’s “failure to give aid” equalled “not loving their neighbor”. John then (under the inerrant inspiration of the Holy Spirit) attaches a number of escalating descriptors to the concept of “failing to love” others. In order, the answers are (in NASB terminology):
 - “abides in death” (ie. is not saved)
 - “hates” and is a “murderer”
 - Jesus “laid down his life” for us
 - we must “lay down our lives” for others
 - “closes his heart against” another person
 - loving “with word or tongue” as opposed to loving “in deed and truth”. Also see 1 John 4:20.

Note: Don’t miss that final question: “How are you doing on both of those?”
(ie, loving with words vs. loving through action).

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Luke 10:25-37)

How would you feel if you were homeless, hungry and cold, and you sought help from someone who professed to be a Christian, and they seemed too preoccupied with their own agenda to respond to you with compassion and love? I suspect that you wouldn't think much of their faith.

One of Jesus' most famous stories, the parable of the Good Samaritan, began with a test. Jesus' interrogator, a theological expert in the Jewish law, asked Jesus: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The assumption behind this man's question is that eternal life is obtained by doing works. Jesus responded with another question: "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" Jesus invited him to reflect upon what God has revealed concerning his requirements for mankind. How can man walk in fellowship with a holy God? This man answered Jesus' question by combining Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus responded: "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live."

Was Jesus suggesting that we can be saved through keeping the law? Is eternal life gained through doing good works? No, the law was never given so that by keeping it man merited God's favor. God gave us the law to show us what sinners we are and our need to be saved by grace through faith (Matthew 5:20 & 5:48). Instead, when properly understood, the Scriptures point us to Jesus (John 5:39). Salvation has always been by faith (Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 3:10-11). God's standard is perfection, and this expert in the law apparently understood that. And so to get off the hook, he used a diversionary tactic—"And who is my neighbor?" His defense was his ignorance. "It's the Scriptures fault. It hasn't made it clear who my neighbor is." What he is really trying to do is narrow the number of people to whom he is obligated to love. What is the minimum obedience required? "Maybe I can meet that", he thought.

Jesus was more than happy to answer that question and he did so by telling a parable. Jericho is located in the depths of the Jordan Valley, and the road leading there from Jerusalem wound through a rocky wasteland infested with bandits. People usually traveled in groups for protection, but Jesus told of a lone man who had been set upon by robbers, beaten mercilessly, robbed of all he possessed—even his clothing—and left to die.

Jesus then introduced three men who had traveled down that same road. The first two were among the religious leaders of Israel—and the question was, what would they do? Would they act neighborly towards this poor, seriously wounded man? Would they love him as they loved themselves (Leviticus 19:18)? Neither did. Many excuses have been offered for these religious leaders' failure to help: fear of becoming ceremonially unclean from touching what they may have thought was a corpse, interruption of their plans, or fear of being robbed themselves while rendering aid. The text gives no motive for their refusal to love this man, nor is it interested in excuses. The point is that these religious men who knew God's requirements of love, failed to respond to this man's need when it was within their power to help. That's all we really need to know.

Those listening must have been wondering, "Who will finally love this dying man and come to his rescue?" Jesus had already mentioned two members of the Jewish clergy. Who will he introduce next? Jesus is always full of surprises—maybe a common Jewish layperson will do the right thing. No—Jesus introduced a despised Samaritan into the story! Contrast the responses of these three men: the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road, but the Samaritan felt compassion and cared for him. All three saw the same thing, a seriously injured man, but only the Samaritan had compassion. He bound up his wounds with strips of fabric—probably torn from his own clothes (I doubt he was carrying a first aid kit!). He anointed his cuts and placed the man on his own mule, took him to an inn, and paid for over three weeks' worth of care (with the offer of whatever else it cost)!

That is the story. Jesus wanted to make sure that the expert in the law got the lesson, so he asked, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" When the lawyer correctly responded: "The one who showed mercy toward him", Jesus then said, "Go and do the same." (Notice that this prejudicial Jewish lawyer couldn't bring himself to say, "The Samaritan." He just said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." So Jesus called him to emulate a despised Samaritan!)

So, "Who is my neighbor?" My neighbor is that person who is in need, whose need I can see, whose need I can meet. He may be my bitter enemy or someone with whom I differ greatly on issues of theology, politics, or the hot-button moral issues of the day. My neighbor may be someone whom I know very well or he may be a complete stranger I happen upon. And helping him may be both time consuming and expensive. Jesus' concern is not, "Who is my neighbor?" It is with "proving to be a neighbor." We need to ask ourselves: "Am I more concerned about calculating the limits of my obligation to love or about caring for hurting people?" Love is not a sentimental feeling, but a sacrificial action. And love for neighbor is an overflow of our love for God (1 John 3:17).

Let's go back to the question originally raised by the lawyer. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" If eternal life is achieved by wholehearted love of God and Samaritan-like compassion towards our neighbor, there is no hope for any of us. Loving your neighbor will not save you. Only Jesus can save you. But loving your neighbor is visible evidence of your love for God. So as you are out and about in the world—representing our Savior—remember the story of the Good Samaritan, and go and do likewise.

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage.*

We can use it to learn more about the nature of genuine compassion...

Monday—Read Exodus 33:18-19 & 34:6-7. When God revealed his "glorious goodness", what was it?

Tuesday—Read Psalm 78:36-39. What **does** God's compassion consider? What **doesn't** it consider?

Wednesday—Read Isaiah 30:15-22. Toward what kinds of people does God desire to show compassion?
What response should God's compassion elicit from us (v. 22)?

Thursday—Read Luke 15:25-32. Did the Father dispute the facts of v. 30? Did those facts change his response?

Friday—Read Colossians 3:14. Describe how this lifestyle reflects all you've learned about God's compassion.

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,***
study **Matthew 22:37-40.**

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



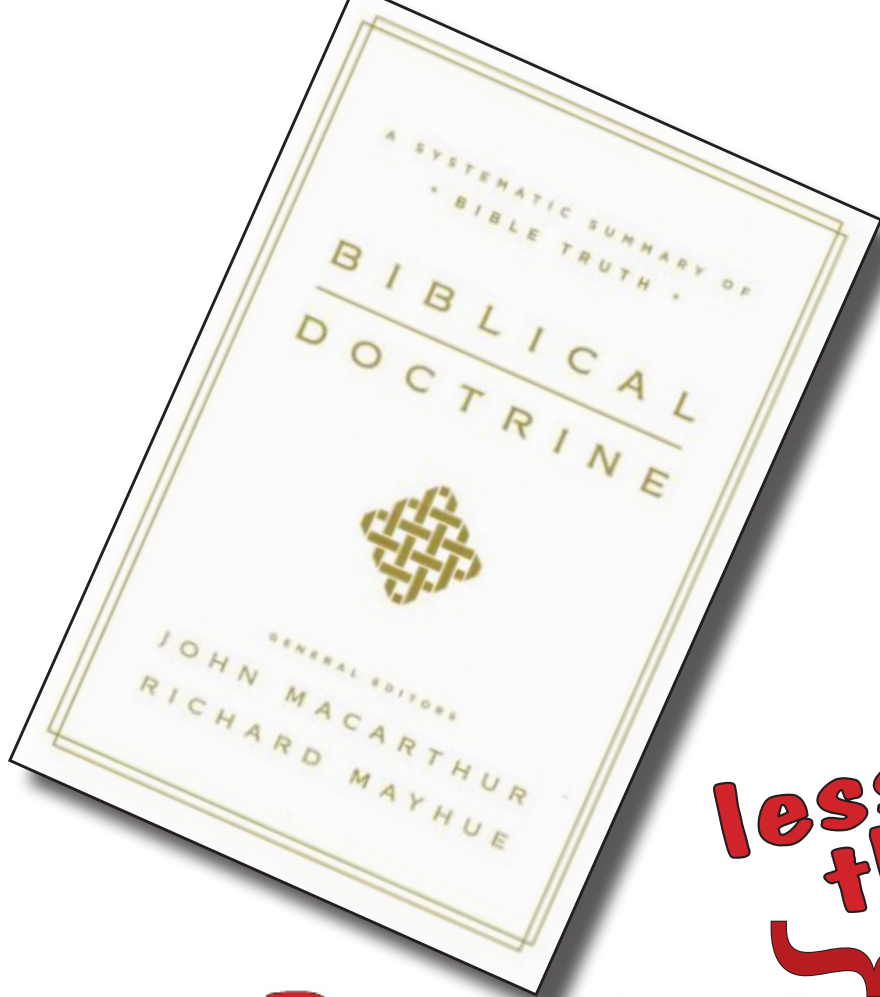
What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]



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